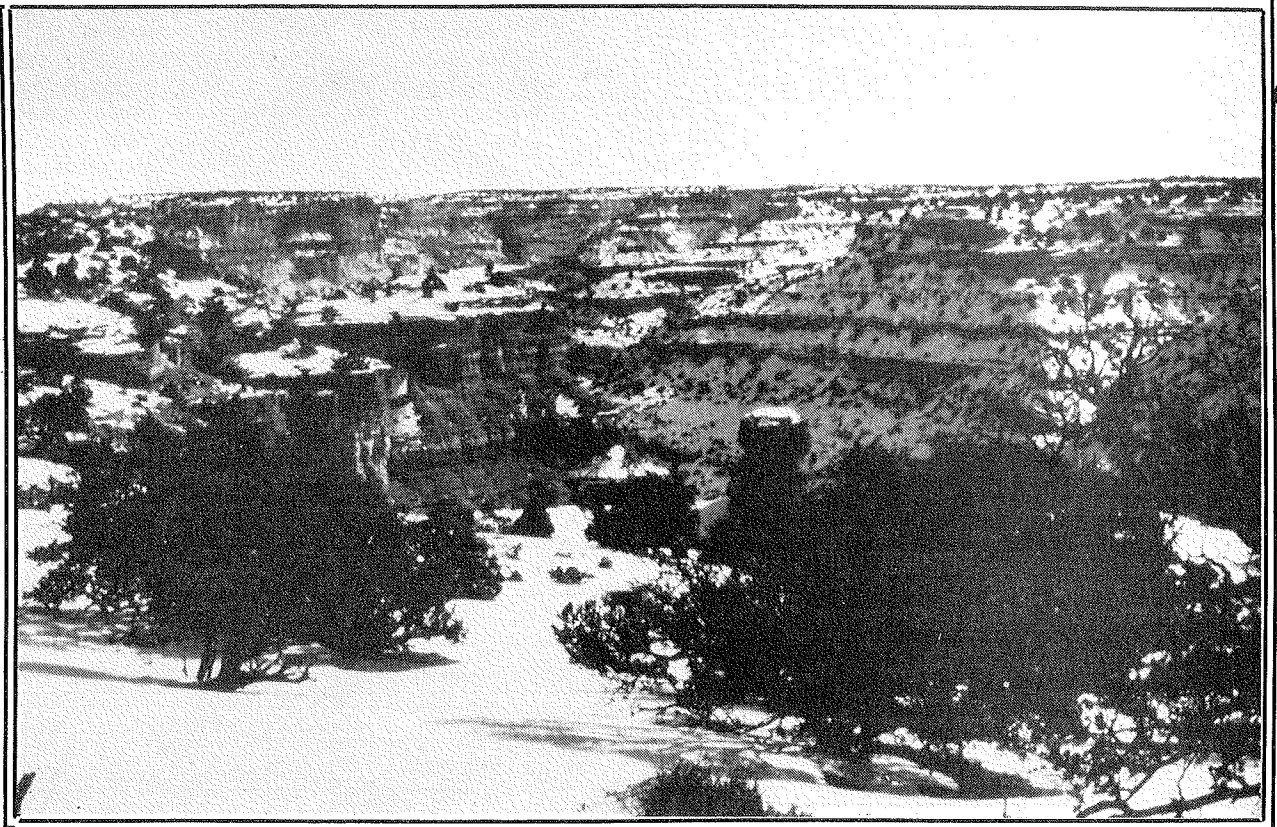


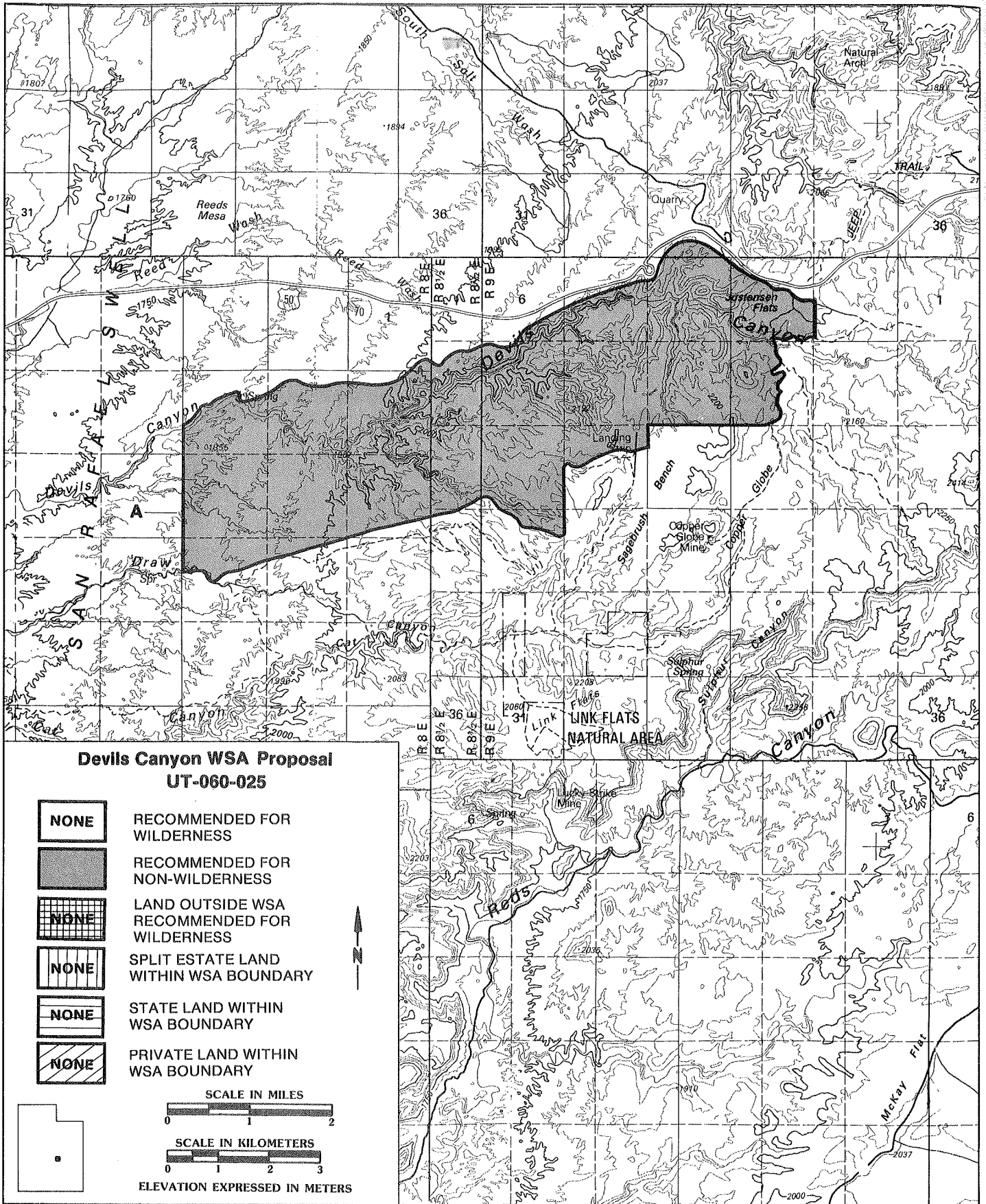
# Devils Canyon WSA



# DEVILS CANYON WSA

R. 8 E.

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# DEVILS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

## 1. THE STUDY AREA: 9,610 acres

The Devils Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA) (UT-060-025) is in Emery County, about 12 miles south of Emery, Utah (population 372). The unit is about 7.5 miles long, from east to west, and up to 2.5 miles from north to south. Interstate Highway 70 (I-70) is north of and parallels the upper part of Devils Canyon. I-70 borders the WSA for about 7 miles on the northeast. Roads and sections of State land form the remaining boundaries (see Map). The WSA contains 9,610 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

There are no private, State or split-estate in-holdings within the WSA (see Table 1).

Devils Canyon is a rugged, sinuous gorge, with numerous short tributary canyons, that drains westward towards Muddy Creek. Pour-offs, abrupt changes in the gradient of the canyon floor, are characteristic of the area. The northeastern part of the WSA is a densely vegetated area of rounded knobs and benches. The southwestern portion of the WSA is a sparsely vegetated area of pink, red, cream, and purple soils.

Elevations in the WSA range from 6,200 feet in Devils Canyon at the western end of the WSA to 7,400 feet in the southeast. Pinyon-juniper is the dominant vegetation, on 88 percent of the area, with desert shrub and saltbush in the lower elevations.

TABLE 1  
LAND STATUS AND ACREAGE SUMMARY IN THE STUDY AREA

WITHIN THE WSA	ACRES
BLM (surface and subsurface)	9,610
Split-Estate (BLM surface only)	0
In-holdings (State, Private)	0
Total	9,610
WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS BOUNDARY	
BLM (within the WSA)	0
BLM (outside the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (within the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (outside the WSA)	0
Total BLM land recommended for wilderness	0
In-holdings (State, private)	0
WITHIN THE AREA NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS	
BLM	9,610
Split-Estate	0
Total BLM land not recommended for wilderness	9,610
In-holdings (State, Private)	0

Source: BLM File Data

## DEVILS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) finalized in November 1990. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a no wilderness (no action) alternative, which is the recommendation in this report, an all wilderness alternative.

Subsequent to publication of the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Final EIS, the Utah State Director approved the San Rafael Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RMP). The plan includes 1,620 acres of the Devils Canyon WSA which was included within the I-70 Scenic Corridor Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) to protect scenic values. Special management requirements now in effect within the ACEC include limiting off-highway vehicles (OHVs) to designated roads and trails and management of the area to meet Class I visual resource management (VRM) guidelines, where consistent with valid existing rights.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE:

- 0 acres  
(recommended for wilderness)
- 9,610 acres  
(not recommended for wilderness)

The recommendation for this WSA is to release the entire area for uses other than wilderness. Designation of the entire area is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The alternative selected, however, would be implemented in a manner which would utilize all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. The WSA would be released for uses other than wilderness.

About 93 percent of the WSA is natural, 73 percent has outstanding opportunities for solitude, and 33 percent has outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation. Sounds from traffic on nearby I-70 limit solitude and primitive recreation values along some of the benches and parts of Devils Canyon that are near the highway. The relatively small size of the WSA and its narrow shape further reduce opportunities for solitude.

Approximately 400 of the 550 estimated annual visitor days of recreational use in the WSA are associated with use of motorized vehicles. The location of the study area adjacent to I-70 promotes this type of use. Release of the study area would allow for construction of a campground at Justensen Flats adjacent to the Interstate as proposed in the San Rafael Resource Management Plan (RMP).

Approximately 1,620 acres of the area recommended for wilderness designation are in the I-70 Scenic Corridor ACEC where restrictions on OHVs and management for protection of scenic values would continue to be administratively applied if the area is released from wilderness consideration and protection of wilderness characteristics is not a management objective.

### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### A. Naturalness

Naturalness is defined as an attribute in which the evidence of man is substantially unnoticeable to the average visitor and where minor imprints of man exhibit no cumulative impact that is substantially noticeable. About 93 percent (8,950 acres) of the WSA meets the criterion for naturalness. Imprints of human activities affect approximately 18 percent (1,680 acres) of the WSA. Of the 1,680 acres affected by existing OHV use, about 660 acres have been significantly impacted and do not meet the naturalness criterion for areas under wilderness review.

The major imprints surrounding the Devils Canyon WSA were excluded by boundary determinations during the BLM Intensive Wilderness Inventory. What remains of note is a reservoir, gap fence, and an accumulation of OHV trails and camping areas.

The reservoir is in the Justensen Flats area. It has silted in and holds little or no water. The gap fence is along the southeastern boundary of the WSA and is approximately a 0.25 mile long. Both the reservoir and fence are substantially unnoticeable.

## DEVILS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Extensive OHV use has caused imprints (such as trails and camp sites) in the Justensen Flats, Sagebrush Bench, and Kimball Draw areas of the WSA.

The most heavily used areas are Justensen Flats and the Devils Canyon entrance where six to eight trails and several camping areas have become well established. Campers and trailers are common in this area during the spring and fall months. BLM recreation use statistics since 1976 show a steady number of users each year. More than 100 people and 10 camping units have been counted in the Justensen Flats area during Easter weekend. The impacted area on Justensen Flats is about 600 acres.

The Sagebrush Bench area is also used by recreational OHVs and by individuals looking for wild horses. An old road leads from Link Flats to an open valley and airstrip. Some vehicular camping takes place in the valley, but mostly trails exist where OHVs have explored. Recreational use in this area is at least half the amount that occurs in Justensen Flats, and there are fewer trails. Overall, about 60 acres have been affected.

Recreationists also travel into Kimball Draw searching for wild horses or for vehicular play. Access is obtained easily by way of Kimball Draw and an old seismic line that forms the WSA's southern boundary. Vehicular impacts are less concentrated than in Justensen Flats and consist mainly of 2-wheel tracks. Approximately 960 acres have been disturbed by OHV use in this portion of the WSA.

### B. Solitude

About 73 percent of the WSA (7,050 acres) meets the criterion for outstanding solitude. The remaining 27 percent (2,560 acres) does not meet the criterion. The narrow configuration of the WSA and its alignment with I-70 result in a lack of solitude in some portions of the WSA.

Outstanding opportunities for solitude occur in parts of the WSA. Such areas, however, are limited to 3 miles of the western portion of the Devils Canyon drainage and several of the southeastern

tributaries, where steep cliffs and the sinuous nature of the canyon effectively screen sights and sounds for considerable distances. Off-site intrusions and influences are practically nonexistent within these specific areas.

Approximately 3 miles of the WSA's northernmost boundary is along the I-70 right-of-way, including the Devils Canyon View Area. I-70 parallels the WSA and makes a significant grade to the Moore Road-Copper Globe turnoff on the east and Salt Wash to the west. I-70 receives large volumes of traffic, especially semi-trucks and trailers. A Utah Department of Transportation study indicated that more than 1.8 million people traveled on I-70 through the San Rafael Swell in 1987.

Travel along I-70 is expected to increase and more than 2,700 vehicles a day are expected to travel I-70 across the swell by the year 2005.

The continual traffic noise of I-70 reduces the sense of solitude in several areas in the WSA. These areas include the northern portion from the right-of-way to the Devils Canyon drainage, the Justensen Flats area, and specific points throughout the Devils Canyon drainage. Traffic also can be heard in the high country on the southern side of Devils Canyon and the southwestern portion of the WSA, where sounds of I-70 are present. These areas, however, receive intermittent sounds that are not as distinguishable as in the northern parts of the WSA.

Justensen Flats, approximately 600 acres in size, is along a portion of I-70 where traffic is clearly visible. I-70 makes a steep incline here and constant noise from vehicles can be heard. Most of the area is flat grassland, spotted with clusters of pinyon pine and juniper trees, and outstanding opportunities for solitude are lacking.

The northern portion of the WSA, from the I-70 right-of-way to the Devils Canyon drainage, also lacks solitude because of the proximity of I-70 and its almost constant traffic noise.

In some specific locations within the Devils Canyon drainage, traffic noise

## DEVILS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

from I-70 is so noticeable that it dominates the natural sounds. The canyon is narrow and confined. On the east end approximately 1,100 acres are affected by I-70 sounds. Only a strip of land about 1 mile wide along the southern side of the WSA is free from the noise influence of I-70.

### C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Opportunities for hiking and backpacking are outstanding on 3,200 acres.

These opportunities are confined primarily to the eastern portion of the WSA or to the Devils Canyon drainages because of the rugged terrain that splits the WSA. The Devils Canyon drainage is one of the few places in the WSA where recreational opportunities are outstanding and this drainage is probably where most visitors enter and leave the WSA. It is also the main focal point and makes up the most interesting terrain in the WSA.

Hunting and horseback riding are constrained because of the lack of game, rugged topography, and lack of water.

### D. Special Features

The entire WSA is rated outstanding for scenic quality.

A small wild horse herd of approximately 10 to 15 animals use the WSA. Cougar, a wildlife species associated with wilderness, may occasionally visit the WSA. The black-footed ferret, an endangered species, and nine additional animal species considered sensitive, may frequent or inhabit the WSA.

Two plant species, Maguire daisy (Eriogon maguirei var. maguirei) and Wright fishhook cactus, (Sclerocactus wrightiae), that are listed as endangered, may be found within or near the WSA. Two threatened plant species, Jonesii cycladenia (Cycladenia humilis var. jonesii) and Last Chance townsendia (Townsendia aprica), and an additional five plant species that are considered sensitive may also occur in the WSA.

Refer to Appendix 4 and the Affected Environment, Vegetation and Wildlife Including Special Status Species sections of the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Final EIS for additional information.

### Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

#### A. Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of this WSA would add a potential natural vegetation (PNV) ecosystem not presently represented in the NWPS. PNV is the vegetative type that would eventually become climax vegetation if not altered by human interference, and is not necessarily the vegetation that is currently present in an area.

The WSA is in the Colorado Plateau Province/Ecoregion. The PNV in the WSA is galleta-threeawn shrubsteppe (1,922 acres) and juniper-pinyon woodland (7,688 acres).

The galleta-threeawn shrubsteppe PNV is not represented at all in the NWPS and is represented in other BLM wilderness study areas only in Utah.

Juniper-pinyon woodland PNV is represented in the NWPS and is common in other BLM study areas, both in Utah and in other states.

This information is summarized in Table 2 from data compiled in December 1989.

#### B. Assessing the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation within a Days Driving Time (5 Hours) of Major Population Centers

The WSA is within a 5-hour drive of the Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah and Provo-Orem, Utah, standard metropolitan statistical areas.

Table 3 summarizes the number and acreages of designated wilderness and other BLM study areas within a 5-hour drive of these population centers.



# DEVILS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

TABLE 2  
ECOSYSTEM REPRESENTATION

BAILEY-KUCHLER CLASSIFICATION (PNV)	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
NATIONWIDE (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)				
Galleta-Threeawn Shrubsteppe	0	0	10	188,804
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	11	1,401,745	84	2,136,317
UTAH (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)				
Galleta-Threeawn Shrubsteppe	0	0	10	188,804
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	1	26,000	53	1,698,510

Source: BLM File Data.

TABLE 3  
WILDERNESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS OF MAJOR POPULATION CENTERS

POPULATION CENTERS	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah	11	1,099,962	78	2,250,065
Provo-Orem, Utah	11	721,793	90	2,777,258

Source: BLM File Data.

## C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

The Devil's Canyon WSA could contribute significantly to balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas within the NWPS.

As of January 1987, the NWPS included 44 areas comprising 3,443,330 acres in Utah and in Colorado, the adjacent state nearest the WSA.

A Devils Canyon Wilderness would supplement the NWPS in the Canyonlands Section of the Colorado Plateau where there are just two established wilderness areas totaling 70,751 acres. There are three designated wilderness areas within 100 miles of the WSA. To the northwest is the 28,000-acre Mt. Nebo Wilderness (U. S. Forest Service [FS]), to the southeast is the 45,000-acre Dark Canyon Wilderness (FS), and to the southwest is

the 25,751-acre Box-Death Hollow Wilderness (FS).

Manageability (The area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character.)

If designated, the WSA could be managed as wilderness to preserve the values now present in the area. Livestock grazing and maintenance of rangeland development would continue, but would not significantly affect wilderness values. There are no mineral leases in the WSA and new leases would not be issued. There are presently no mining claims in the WSA and the probability of valid claims being located in the WSA at the time of designation is low.

There are no in-holdings or other valid rights in the WSA that would complicate wilderness management. However, it would be administratively difficult to control OHV use in the Justensen Flat area

## DEVILS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

adjacent to I-70 where the area is readily accessible because there are no topographic barriers and where OHV use has been popular for many years. The off-site sights and sounds of I-70 could not be managed or controlled.

### Energy and Mineral Resource Values

Because the WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM) did not prepare a mineral assessment report for the area. According to BLM geologists, the potential for oil and gas resources in the WSA is low. The potential for potash, tar sand, and geothermal resources is also low.

The potential for undiscovered uranium deposits is moderate. However, it is believed that ore bodies, if found in the WSA, would be small discontinuous, and at depths presently uneconomical to mine. The potential for other metallic minerals and for gypsum is low.

### Impacts on Resources

The comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for alternatives considered including designation or nondesignation of the area as wilderness.

### Local Social and Economic Considerations

Social and economic factors were not considered to be significant issues in the EIS.

### Summary of WSA-Specific Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Comments received during the early stages of the EIS preparation were used to develop significant study issues and alternatives for the ultimate management of the WSA.

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, a total of 300 inputs specifically addressing this WSA were received from 947 commenters, including oral statements received at 17 public hearings on the EIS. Each letter or oral testimony was considered to be one input. Duplicate letters or oral statements by the

same commenter were not counted as additional inputs or signatures. Each individual was credited with one signature or testimony regardless of the number of inputs. In general, 52 commenters supported wilderness designation for part or all of the WSA, while 441 commenters were opposed. Four hundred and fifty-four commenters addressed the relative merits of the EIS but took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Those favoring wilderness commented on the special features of the WSA and the opportunities for solitude. Of particular concern was the need to protect the WSA from OHV use. The majority of those commenting in favor of wilderness were from outside of Utah.

Those opposing wilderness were concerned that wilderness would preclude mineral exploration and development and restrict livestock management and public access, cause Federal air quality standards for the area to become more restrictive, prove to be incompatible with multiple use, and harm State and local economies. Most of those opposing wilderness designation were from rural Utah.

One Federal agency, the USBM, expressed no opinion regarding wilderness designation, but stated that BLM had underestimated the petroleum potential of the WSA.

No comment letters were received on the Final EIS.

There are no State sections within the WSA. The State of Utah expressed general opposition to wilderness designation, but did not take a definite position regarding wilderness designation of the WSA. The State commented that the WSA has both low wilderness values and conflicts compared with other WSAs in the San Rafael Swell Region, that the major concern is with extensive ORV use, and that moderate conflicts exist with potential gypsum resource developments. Specific State comments dealt with errors in wording and page numbers, the genesis and size of tar sand units, the degree of uranium potential, the presence of golden eagles and desert bighorn sheep, the degree of solitude, and zoning.



#### DEVILS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

The Devils Canyon WSA is in Emery County. The Zoning Resolution of Emery County classified the WSA as potential future mining and grazing land. The Emery County Commission is opposed to wilderness designation for the WSA and has endorsed the Consolidated Local Government Response to Wilderness that opposes wilderness designation of BLM lands in Utah. In commenting on the Draft EIS, the Commission commented that the wilderness values of the WSA are questionable and that designation would be contrary to the County Master Plan. The Commission expressed concerns that wilderness could lead to stricter air quality standards and could prevent mining, which could limit economic growth in Emery County.

# DEVILS CANYON WSA

Table 4  
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative<sup>a</sup>

Recommendation		Alternatives	
Issue Topic	No Action/No Wilderness	All Wilderness (9,610 Acres)	
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values would not be protected by wilderness designation and loss would occur as intrusions increase. In the foreseeable future, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be reduced on up to 3,844 acres of the WSA from increased OHV activity. OHV use would be restricted to designated roads and trails. OHV monitoring and enforcement of protective measures would be necessary to assure that impacts on special features, such as special status species, would not be significant.	Wilderness designation would preserve the wilderness values in the WSA. Visitor use restrictions may be necessary to prevent congestion within Devil's Canyon.	
Impacts on Vegetation	Vegetation types would not be affected by implementation of this alternative. Continued OHV use would result in the loss of individual plants of special status species. However, OHV use would be restricted to designated roads and trails, which would reduce the potential for disturbance of populations of threatened, endangered, and other special status plant species.	By eliminating all OHV use, wilderness designation would provide additional protection to vegetation, including all populations of threatened, endangered, or sensitive plants which may occur in the WSA.	
Impacts on Wildlife Habitat and Populations	Increased OHV use would result in adverse impacts on wildlife habitat and populations including special status species on about 40 percent (3,844 acres) of the WSA. Monitoring of OHV use and enforcement of protective measures would be necessary to ensure that impacts would not be significant.	By eliminating all OHV use, wilderness designation would protect all wildlife species and provide additional solitude.	
Impacts on Cultural Resources	Intentional or unintentional damage to archaeological sites may occur due to continued vehicular access and OHV use. Cultural resource management would continue without regard to preservation of other wilderness values.	Cultural resources would be protected under this alternative. Cultural resource management may be limited in scope and execution in order to protect other wilderness values.	
Impacts on Recreation	The quality of primitive recreation would be reduced on 40 percent (3,844 acres) of the WSA in the Justensen Flat, Sagebrush Bench, Kimball Draw, and upper Devils Canyon areas. Both primitive and mechanized recreational use would increase 2 to 7 percent over the next 30 years. Primitive use may eventually decline.	Primitive recreational values would be protected. Primitive recreational use would increase from the current 150 annual visitor days up to as much as 1,307 visitor days per year by the end of 30 years. Existing (400 annual visitor days) and projected (up to 3,486 annual visitor days by the end of 30 years) ORV recreational use would be eliminated. OHV use in the San Rafael region would probably not decline because there are other ORV play areas near but outside the WSA.	

<sup>a</sup> The BLM San Rafael RMP was approved following publication of the BLM Utah Statewide Wilderness EIS. The analysis of impacts summarized here has been modified to reflect the more restrictive resource management practices established by the RMP.